

Courageous American journalists have documented volatile turning points in our history—and the world's history—and some have suffered or even died for their efforts, beginning with America's first martyr to press freedom, Elijah Lovejoy.

Recently, we witnessed the troubling case of Iranian-American journalist Roxana Saberi, who was arrested by Iranian authorities in January for buying a bottle of wine and was later tried behind closed doors and detained on absurd and unfounded charges of espionage. Two other American journalists—Laura Ling and Euna Lee—were detained by North Korean officials last month, while working on a story about the plight of female Chinese refugees living along the Chinese border. These troubling events are just two examples of the growing threat facing journalists around the world.

Preserving press freedoms and freedom of expression is one of my highest priorities as Chairman of the Judiciary Committee. That is why I am pleased to join Senators FEINGOLD, KAUFMAN and LUGAR in cosponsoring a resolution in honor of World Press Freedom Day.

Next week, the Judiciary Committee will consider legislation that I introduced and that is cosponsored by Senators KENNEDY, SPECTER, FEINGOLD, WHITEHOUSE, MCCASKILL and TESTER to roll back the government's excessive use of the state secrets privilege to shield government information. The State Secrets Protection Act, S. 417, will help guide the Federal courts to balance the government's legitimate interests in protecting national security, with accountability and the rights of citizens to obtain government information and seek judicial redress.

The committee also has on its agenda long-overdue legislation to establish a qualified privilege for journalists to protect the confidentiality of their sources and the public's right to know—the Free Flow of Information Act, S. 448 and H.R. 985. Last year, the Senate Judiciary Committee favorably reported a similar measure that I cosponsored with Senators LUGAR, DODD, SPECTER, SCHUMER, and GRAHAM, with a strong, bipartisan 15 to 4 vote.

I am very pleased that President Obama has stated his support of Federal shield legislation, and that Attorney General Eric Holder has also expressed his support of a carefully crafted federal shield law. At my request, the Obama administration is working closely with the committee to help reach consensus on a meaningful Federal shield bill that we can enact this year.

As we celebrate World Press Freedom Day, we are reminded that an open and accountable society comes with the

duty of its citizens to seek out the truth and to empower themselves with that knowledge. All of us—whether Republican, Democrat or Independent—have an interest in preserving press freedoms and protecting the public's right to know. Enacting the State Secrets Protection Act and the Free Flow of Information Act will send a powerful signal to the entire world about this Nation's commitment to freedom of expression. For this reason, I strongly encourage all Members to join me in supporting the resolution in honor of World Press Freedom Day and in supporting these very important bills.

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the resolution be agreed to, the preamble be agreed to, the motions to reconsider be laid upon the table, with no intervening action or debate, and any statements related to the measure be printed in the RECORD.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The resolution (S. Res. 124) was agreed to.

The preamble was agreed to.

The resolution, with its preamble, reads as follows:

S. RES. 124

Whereas, in 1993, the United Nations General Assembly proclaimed May 3 of each year as "World Press Freedom Day" to celebrate the fundamental principles of press freedom, to evaluate the state of press freedom around the world, to defend the media from attacks on the independence of the media, and to pay tribute to journalists who have lost their lives in the line of duty;

Whereas, according to the International Federation of Journalists, at least 109 journalists and other media workers were killed in 2008 while on assignment;

Whereas, according to the Committee to Protect Journalists, nearly 3 out of 4 journalists killed in the line of duty are murdered, and the killers go unpunished in nearly 9 of 10 cases;

Whereas, according to estimates by Reporters Without Borders, in 2008, 673 journalists were arrested, 929 journalists were physically attacked or threatened, and 29 journalists were kidnapped;

Whereas Freedom House reported that press freedom has been declining during recent years in both authoritarian countries and established democracies;

Whereas, reflecting the rise in influence of Internet reporting, an increasing number of online editors, bloggers, and web-based reporters are being imprisoned and their websites closed; and

Whereas press freedom is a key component of democratic governance and socio-economic development and enhances public accountability, transparency and participation: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) recognizes the threats to press freedom and expression around the world, on the occasion of World Press Freedom Day on May 3, 2009;

(2) commends journalists around the world for the essential role they play in promoting

government accountability and strengthening civil society, despite numerous threats;

(3) pays tribute to the journalists who have lost their lives in the line of duty;

(4) condemns all actions around the world that suppress press freedom;

(5) reaffirms the centrality of press freedom to efforts by the United States to support democracy, mitigate conflict, and promote good governance around the world; and

(6) calls on the President and the Secretary of State to develop means by which the United States Government can more rapidly identify, publicize, and respond to threats against press freedom around the world.

ORDERS FOR FRIDAY, MAY 1, 2009

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that when the Senate completes its business today, it adjourn until 9:30 a.m. tomorrow, Friday, May 1; that following the prayer and pledge, the Journal of proceedings be approved to date, the morning hour be deemed expired, the time for the two leaders be reserved for their use later in the day, and that the Senate resume consideration of S. 896, the Helping Families Save Their Homes Act.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

PROGRAM

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, tomorrow we hope to get to a finite list of amendments on the bill so we can complete action on the legislation early next week.

ADJOURNMENT UNTIL 9:30 A.M. TOMORROW

Mr. SCHUMER. If there is no further business to come before the Senate, I ask unanimous consent it adjourn under the previous order.

There being no objection, the Senate, at 7:15 p.m., adjourned until Friday, May 1, 2009, at 9:30 a.m.

NOMINATIONS

Executive nomination received by the Senate:

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

CHARLES A. BLANCHARD, OF ARIZONA, TO BE GENERAL COUNSEL OF THE DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE, VICE MARY L. WALKER, RESIGNED.

CONFIRMATION

Executive nomination confirmed by the Senate, Thursday, April 30, 2009:

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

THOMAS L. STRICKLAND, OF COLORADO, TO BE ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR FISH AND WILDLIFE.
THE ABOVE NOMINATION WAS APPROVED SUBJECT TO THE NOMINEE'S COMMITMENT TO RESPOND TO REQUESTS TO APPEAR AND TESTIFY BEFORE ANY DULY CONSTITUTED COMMITTEE OF THE SENATE.